

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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R 062300Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1969

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, CS

SUBJECT: ATTEMPTED POWER GRAB IN THE OPPOSITION

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: A MOVE TO OUST THE PRESENT LEADERSHIP OF THE CHIEF OPPOSITION PARTY, NATIONAL UNIFICATION (PUN), HAS BEEN LAUNCHED BY PARTY DISSIDENTS. REACTION OF COSTA RICAN POLS IS LARGELY AGAINST THE POWER GRAB ON PRINCIPLE, ALTHOUGH SOME OPPOSITION LEADERS ARE IN SYMPATHY WITH A REMOVAL OF PRESENT LEADERSHIP. COSTA RICAN CIVIL AUTHORITIES WILL RESOLVE THE ISSUE. END SUMMARY.

2. IN ADDITION TO JOSE FIGUERES' RECENT ANNOUNCEMENTS (SAN JOSE 4716 AND PREVIOUS), THE COSTA RICAN POLITICAL WORLD HAS BEEN SHAKEN BY AN ATTEMPT TO WREST CONTROL OF THE PRINCIPAL OPPOSITION PARTY IN COSTA RICA, THE NATIONAL UNIFICATION PARTY (PUN), FROM FRANCISCO (PACO) CALDERON GUARDIA, THE SICKLY AND AGED BROTHER OF THE PUN FOUNDER AND EX-PRESIDENT, DR. RAFAEL ANGEL CALDERON GUARDIA. THE NEW GROUP, LED BY

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CARLOS LUIS JIMENEZ PACHECO, AN OLD-LINE CALDERONISTA AND

EX-HIGH LEVEL FUNCTIONARY IN THE 1966-70 TREJOS GOVERNMENT, HELD AN EXTRAORDINARY NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, ATTENDED BY 70 REPRESENTATIVES FROM COSTA RICA'S 7 PROVINCES ON NOVEMBER 1 AT WHICH TIME CALDERON AND GUILLERMO VILLALOBOS ARCEWGO PUN SECRETARY-GENERAL, WERE SUMMARILY REPLACED. JIMENEZ WAS ELECTED PRESIDENT AFTER ORLANDO SOTELA, LEADER OF THE UNION OPOSITORA IN THE ASSEMBLY (BUT WHO WAS NOT PRESENT), REPORTEDLY DECLINED THE OFFER.

3. THE "NEW LEADERSHIP" ANNOUNCED IT WOULD WORK FOR UNITY IN THE OPPOSITION AND THAT ITS RANKS WOULD BE OPEN TO ALL. NAMED AMONG HONORARY PRESIDENTS WERE THE WIDOW OF EX-PRESIDENT CALDERON GUARDIA, EX-PRESIDENTS ECHANDI AND TREJOS, DR. ALVARO AGUILAR PERALTA (WHO HAS BEEN OPPOSING CALDERON'S LEADERSHIP FROM WITHIN THE PUN), AND EX-TREJOS MINISTER OSCAR BARAHONA.

4. CALDERON AND VILLALOBOS ANGRILY RESPONDED TO THE ATTEMPTED TAKE-OVER WITH A PRESS CONFERENCE AND THE INITIATION OF APPROPRIATE LEGAL MEASURES BZDFORE THE CIVIL REGISTRY. CONCURRENTLY, THE JIMENEZ GROUP PRESENTED ITS CERTIFYING DOCUMENTS AND INTERPRETATION OF PARTY STATUTES TO THE CIVIL REGISTRY WITH ITS PETITION TO HAVE THEMSELVES DECLARED AS DULY ELECTED NEW OFFICIALS OF TT UNIFICATION NACIONAL. THE CIVIL REGISTRY MAY HAVE TO ELEVATE THE CONFLICT TO THE SUPREME ELECTORAL TRIBUNAL FOR A FINAL DECISION.

5. EX-PRESIDENT ECHANDI AND THE PUN BLOCK IN THE ASSEMBLY HAVE REFUSED TO RECOGNIZE THE NEW GROUP. (EX-PRESIDENT TREJOS SAYS HE WANTS A FEW DAYS TO OBTAIN MORE INFORMATION.) THE WIDOW CALDERON WAS FIRST REPORTED TO HAVE REFUSED AS WELL. IN A SUBSEQUENT STATEMENT SHE JOINED HER VOICE WITH THAT OF HER CHOSEN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE FOR THE PUN IN 1978--AGUILAR PERALTA--TO WARN THAT WHAT HAPPENED IS A SYMPTOM OF THE PUN'S PROBLEMS UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF MRS. CALDERON'S BROTHER-IN-LAW. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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6. COMMENT: REACTION AMONG THE ESTABLISHED POLITICAL PARTIES, INCLUDING THE GOVERNING PLN, IS LARGELY CONTRARY TO THE MOVE TO REMOVE CALDERON BECAUSE OF THE PRECEDENT THAT THE SUCCESS OF THE MEASURE WOULD HAVE FOR THE PARTY SYSTEM IN COSTA RICA. ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT CARRO DESCRIBED A POSSIBLE DECISION IN FAVOR OF THE REBELS AS A "POLITICAL DISASTER." OTHER LEGISLATORS HAVE

ALSO PRONOUNCED IN THIS VEIN. HOWEVER, ORLANDO SOTELA, LEADER OF THE 16 OPPOSITION DEPUTIES, HAS CAREFULLY KEPT HIS OPTIONS OPEN SO FAR.

7. ON THE OTHER HAND, THERE ARE MANY IN COSTA RICA, INCLUDING ECHANDI, THE WIDOW CALDERON, AND TRDOS, WHO WOULD WELCOME THE DEMISE OF THE POWER OF "PACO" CALDERON GUARDIA, WHO, WITH VILLALOBOS, HAS COOPERATED SIGNIFICANTLY WITH THE PLN IN RETURN FOR GOVERNMENT JOBS FOR UN STALWARTS. BOTH ARE VIEWED AS OBSTACLES TO UNITY IN THE OPPOSITION FOR THE 1978 ELECTION.

8. NOT ONLY POLITICAL POWER AND THE NAME AND CONTROL OF THE PARTY ARE AT STAKE; THERE IS ALSO MONEY. THE PARTIDO UNIFICACION NACIONAL (PUN) HEADED BY CALDERON GUARDIA CONTROLS, UNDER COSTA RICAN ELECTION LAW, AN AMOUNT OF MONEY FOR THE NEXT PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN PROPORTIONATE TO ITS DISPLAYED STRENGTH IN THE LAST ELECTION. SINCE THE UNFICACION CANDIDATE RECEIVED 30 PERCENT OF THE VOTE, WHOEVER HEADS THE PARTY WILL HAVE FOR THE PARTY'S DISPOSAL ABOUT \$3 MILLION OF PUBLIC FUNDS FOR THE 1977-78 CAMPAIGN. TODMAN

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